

Peck - Sportsmanship and Winning

THE COST OF PURSUING VICTORY: A STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN SPORTSMANSHIP AND WINNING

THESIS

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DEDICATION

For my parents who signed me up for Little League (despite my protests) and have supported my love of baseball ever since that day.

For the many coaches I have had along the way who showed me an earnest quest for what we want will ultimately lead us to what we need.

For my wife Kerri, who has provided me with a shoulder to lean on and words of encouragement throughout the development of this project.

For my instructors, advisers, and classmates who have provided valuable feedback and critical support from this project's infancy to its completion.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine whether or not coaches who employ win-at-all-costs attitudes actually tend to win more games. As a result of the pressure coaches feel to win, some may turn to more ruthless strategies because they believe this will enhance the on-field success of their teams. The goal of this study was to examine the legitimacy of this practice. A total of 272 varsity baseball coaches from Minnesota and Wisconsin participated in a quantitative investigation designed to uncover any existing relationships between attitudes concerning sportsmanship and on-field success. Analysis of participant responses did not support the viewpoint that coaches who promote sportsmanlike values are automatically at a competitive disadvantage to coaches who utilize more unethical methods. On the contrary, data from this study appeared to reveal a link between a strong belief in sportsmanlike ideals and increases in career winning percentage. In addition, data analysis showed older coaches and coaches with more years of experience in coaching tend to view sportsmanship with a heightened degree of importance.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

At a time when our citizenry is exceedingly concerned about the moral development of our youth, many have pointed to participation in athletics as a potential cause or reinforcement of the ethical ineptitudes present in some of our young people. Others in our society tend to perceive sports as an exceptional medium in developing and fostering integrity in our nation's children. At its core, this debate questions to what extent coaches, at the expense of athlete's moral development, make winning their primary objective. Successful outcomes of contests are obvious ways players and coaches validate their efforts and derive self-esteem (Brown & Rodgers, 1991). But how much emphasis on achieving victory is too much? Children today are participating in a sporting culture that is increasingly callous and some are exposed to "corruption, doping, acts of violence, incivility, and cheating" in their quest for victory (Long, Pantaleon, Bruant, & d'Arripe-Longueville, 2006, p. 331). As a result, the institution of high school sports, which at one point was seen as a worthwhile avenue for the procurement of sportsmanlike values, has been called into question. More high school coaches are "mimicking the highly publicized professional model ... showing their players that winning by any means necessary is acceptable" (Lumpkin, 2008, p. 19).

In response to this trend, researchers have begun to ponder why some settings procure dramatically preferable behaviors by athletes than others. Why do some athletes benefit morally by participating in sports while others become disrespectful to the rules, the officials, and to their opponents when put in a competitive situation? Research points to the coach as a key variable in this disparity. Because coaches are in positions of

authority and have tremendous ability to influence the players they teach, their values and philosophies directly impact the outcome of participatory experience for the youngsters under their leadership (Steelman, 1995). While striving for victory is a goal for most teams, it is because of this aforementioned influence that increased focus needs to be placed on high school coaches' views of sportsmanship and their means of teaching these values to the participating athletes. Due to the fact that sports create such a highly competitive environment for many and often times this competition brings out the worst in its participants, the relationship between sportsmanship and the quest for victory needs to be explored more fully.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to enhance the current data in the area of moral development of athletes by exploring high school baseball coaches' attitudes pertaining to sportsmanship and comparing them to the on-field success of their teams. The researcher has chosen to focus on high school baseball coaches due to the relative lack of data that currently exists in this specific area. It is the researcher's goal to obtain perspective on whether or not coaches who suggest winning is more important than sportsmanship actually tend to win more games than coaches who feel differently. Coaches' views on sportsmanship will also be measured against the variables of age and years of experience to see if perspectives tend to change over time. In addition, respondents will be asked whether or not they are employed as a teacher to determine if these individuals have an increased sense of moral obligation to their athletes.

Background

Does participation in sports lead to enhanced moral behavior or does it produce more negative effects? Several studies have been done to assess the outcomes of involvement in athletics at multiple levels and the findings have been diverse. One study stated "there is no evidence to support the claim that sports build character in high school or anywhere else" (Miracle & Reis, 1994, p. 96), while another stated that sports can be one of "the greatest opportunities for a student to learn honesty, integrity, and ethical behavior" (Sabock, 1988, p. 271). Yet another study asserted "outcomes resulting from participation [in sports] include undue stress and tension, low levels of moral reasoning, overemphasis on winning, poor self-esteem, cheating, internalization of adult norms, disregard for opponents, and lack of respect for others" (McCallister, Blinde, & Weiss, 2000, p. 36). Ironically, McCallister and colleagues (2000) also contended that participation in sports brings about positive outcomes "such as fair play, respect for others, cooperation, decision-making, working with others, skill development, leadership, and moral development" (p. 36). Obviously, there is a great deal of contradictory data on this subject but the perception of the public is quite clear. A recent poll found 80% of respondents perceive the level of sportsmanship displayed by athletes is on the decline (Rauscher, 1994).

This inconsistency in the existing data leads us to question the causes for such extreme contradictions. Much of the research suggests coaches' perceptions and practices have a substantial effect on the attitudes and behaviors of the players under their leadership. This is shown by one researcher's claim that "the coach may in fact be the most significant individual in determining the values and life skills that children learn

through participation" (Steelman, 1995, p. 15). Another author supports Steelman's claim by stating "participating in sports with the wrong kind of coaching could have devastating lifelong impacts on a child's moral development" (The Futurist, 2002, pg. 2). Despite these assertions, various studies have pointed to the fact that coaches tend to minimize the importance of sportsmanship in competition. Instead, several coaches put the bulk of their focus on teaching and reinforcing what they believe are the skills and attitudes that it takes to win.

Naylor (2007) noted the following:

While it might not be politically correct to confess, the outcome of sporting events does matter. It matters to coaches, players, sports organizations, and fans. This reality puts the intrinsic ideals of [sportsmanship] at odds with extrinsic passions and pressures. Scoreboards and standings make winning an explicit goal for any coach that paces the sideline and any athlete that steps onto the field (p. 32).

In a recent poll, the majority of baseball coaches at various levels stated that a coach should do whatever it takes to win as long as specific rules are not broken (Josephson, 2009). This research implies that despite the fact coaches have a great deal of influence over moral behavior many neglect this responsibility. This notion leads us to questions that have not been subject to adequate research. Do coaches who hold their teams to a higher moral standard win less than those who tend not to? Does a look at the winning percentages of various coaches over time support the notion that coaches who stress sportsmanship can't compete with coaches who do not? Is the apprehension some

coaches have to focusing on sportsmanship reasonable if they feel pressure to win? Is there a place for ethics in the winner's circle?

Several researchers have commented on the stressful nature of coaching in general (e.g., Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, & Chung, 2002). Coaches at each level of participation have stated they feel substantial pressure to win from parents, the community, and their school's administration (Miller, Lutz, Shim, Fredenburg, & Miller, 2005). Drewe (2000) states that coaches face numerous ethical dilemmas while leading young people and through interviews with coaches finds "the most common theme to emerge from their answers had to do with making a decision between doing something which would be better for the team, i.e. a win; or doing something which would be better for the individuals involved" (p. 148). Is the pressure coaches face to win substantial enough for coaches to disregard sportsmanship when faced with these dilemmas? And if so, do they actually win more games than coaches who refuse to compromise their moral principles? In the area of high school baseball coaches, there simply is not enough current data to adequately answer these questions.

The lack of data in this area is disappointing due to the fact that millions of American students participate in high school athletics and most view their participation as an important growth experience (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003). This desire to grow does not need to diminish the overall desire to pursue victory in competition. As a result, a study of high school coaches' attitudes towards sportsmanship and the overall on-field success of their respective teams could help others to reflect on their own views and perhaps make constructive changes to their own methodology in this area. If the research shows there is little difference in the success of coaches who are cognizant of the moral

outcomes of their athletes and those that are not, perhaps more coaches would use their position of leadership to enhance the focus of sportsmanship with their players.

Setting

Current high school baseball coaches from Minnesota and Wisconsin with at least one year of experience are the focus of this research. Every person employed as a varsity head baseball coach in Minnesota and Wisconsin at the time of the study was contacted via email and asked to participate in an online survey. The online survey was accessible at www.surveymonkey.com and the results were seen only by the researcher. By focusing on this population, a total sample size of approximately 856 respondents was utilized.

Assumptions and Limitations

This topic is important to the researcher because of the fact he participated in high school baseball as an athlete as well as a coach, and feels strongly that this participation helped shape his character as it exists today. The researcher feels many coaches today are not upholding their solemn responsibility to shape today's youth in the same way. He feels the primary reason why this is occurring is due to the perceived reality that teams cannot consistently win if coaches have high ethical standards of themselves and their players. There is an existing notion that coaches who employ win-at-all-cost tactics tend to do just that - win. It is the researcher's belief that this perception is unfounded and damaging to the ethical development of our youth. The reader needs to be aware of the researcher's bias as well as his desire to have the research show that coaches who abide by a moral code can compete at the same level as those who do not. The researcher believes if the research can quell some of the fears coaches have in this area, changes for the benefit of the athletes' moral well-being can be made more easily.

Several possible limitations of this study should be noted and understood by the reader. First, coaches will be interviewed regarding their feelings on sportsmanship. Whenever an interview is conducted, due to the nature of the questions, there is a possibility of respondents providing socially acceptable answers rather than honest responses. Despite anonymity and a guarantee of confidentiality, it is not certain that coaches will be inclined to admit their true feelings and past behaviors in the area of ethical leadership. As a result of this uncertainty, the reader should be somewhat skeptical of the research findings and interested researchers should attempt to validate any conclusions by furthering the research in this field on their own. Second, this study focuses on high school level coaches in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Because of this, results cannot be generalized across regions and populations.

The intent of this study is not to ascertain a massive quantity of data, but instead is intentionally narrow in its focus to obtain a specific set of answers to a particular set of questions. The discoveries of this research may serve future researchers well in their quest to determine what role winning has on coaches' feelings in terms of the ethical dilemmas within their respective sports.

Definitions

- *Sportsmanship* - the conduct and attitudes considered as befitting participants in sports, especially fair play, courtesy, striving spirit, respect for others, and grace in losing.
- *High School Coach* - the manager or individual of highest influence within a Varsity high school team. Assistant coaches or other subordinates will not be considered for inclusion in the study.

- *Teacher* - a person currently employed as a professional educator by a school district.
- *On-field Success* - the coach's career winning percentage.

Summary

Existing research pertaining to whether or not involvement in athletics is beneficial or detrimental to participants is largely contradictory. Some available research contends athletes are well served by involvement in athletics while other researchers point out that more harm than good is done by participating. Investigations into these differences tend to suggest the level of priority coaches give sportsmanship has a lot to do with the eventual behaviors of the athletes under their leadership. While this fact would seem to encourage more coaches to actively stress ethics and values to their players, the notion that this type of focus will detract from their ability to consistently win tends to impede their level of attention in this area. Is this notion founded in myth or in fact? Do coaches who stress sportsmanship and integrity win as often as those that do not?

CHAPTER 2

Coaching and Sportsmanship - A Study of Existing Literature

Competence is doing things right, character is doing the right things, and this literature review will show how critical it is for coaches to possess both. This review of literature will draw attention to points of view surrounding ethical development in sports by outlining the arguments of those who see athletics as a place where children learn win-at-all-costs attitudes, as well as those who see sports as a mechanism for learning values and skills that will help participants in their future. In addition, the literature review will highlight the research asserting the importance of coaching in making participation in athletics a positive environment for moral development.

The Need for Character Development

There is a fear in our society that a moral deterioration has taken place the past several years. One study found that well over half of the 9,000 college aged respondents admitted to cheating on examinations, driving drunk and telling lies within the past month (Barnhill, 1995). Heslep (1995) stated there was a dire need for character education in our schools due to the sharp rise in criminal acts committed by teens. Forty-eight states have since altered their state mandated curriculum to include character education (Nielson, 1998). Despite this trend, virtually all of the attention to character building is occurring at the elementary level. In fact, Lockwood (1997) stated that 85% of character education occurred at the elementary level, 10% at the middle level, and a mere 5% took place in our nation's high schools. While a significant movement has occurred, our nation's high school students still may not be exposed to the ideas of integrity and character.

Character development may be even more important for high school students participating in athletics. A recent study showed nearly two-thirds of high school athletes admitted to cheating on an exam in the past year. The same study showed only 60% of all high school students admitted to cheating indicating athletes cheat more than non-athletes. The survey went on to find nearly 40% of male athletes and 25% of female athletes would have no reservations about using a stolen playbook to gain a competitive advantage. In addition, 54% of high school football players and 49% of boys basketball players approved of trash talking. 34% of male athletes at the high school level thought a coach swearing at an official or getting kicked out of a contest was an acceptable means to motivate their team. Boys participating in baseball, football, and basketball were found to value sportsmanship less than participants in others sports. These athletes were substantially more likely to cheat on the field and in school, and to deliberately try to hurt or intimidate opposing players than boys involved in other sports (Josephson, 2006).

The Role of Sports in American Society

For generations, sports have served to enhance and even define childhoods. The National Federation of State High School Associations reported in 2003 that 6.8 million students participated in high school sports which equaled 55.4% of all high school students (NFSHSA, 2003). Furthermore, approximately 35 million children between the ages of 6 and 16 are involved in youth sport activities (Leonard, 1998). The novelist Albert Camus said of his boyhood, "Sport was the main occupation of all of us, and continued to be mine for a long time. That is where I had my only lessons in ethics" (Plimpton, 1992, p. 466). The idea that the grandeur of sports appeals to us is certainly not new. "From early Greek Olympics, the gladiators in the Roman coliseum and the

tribal games of Africa, sports have appealed to something deep in people" (Plimpton, 1992, p. 411). Former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Earl Warren explained his love of sports by stating, "I always turn to the sports pages first. The sports pages reward people's accomplishments, the front pages nothing but man's failures" (Plimpton, 1992, p. 470). For many, sports are so much more than simply games we play. "Sports provide a context for us, a backdrop against which we can measure our efforts. [We learn] about the world, our ancestors, and our geographic region. We learn about values, beliefs, and ideas of good and evil" (Hochstetler, 2006, p. 37).

It is perceived by some that any attempt to teach values by anyone other than the family would be met with the question, whose values? (Haydon, 1997). However, "some parents believe that values such as cooperation, fair play, learning how to win and lose, self-discipline, and teamwork are instilled in young people through participation in sports" (Lumpkin, 2008, p. 19). Children and adolescents are at "critical periods for the learning of socially appropriate values and life skills that provide the foundation for adulthood" (McCallister, et al., 2000, pg. 35). Austin (2009) argues

Sports needs to be taken seriously, in part because it is through arguing about sports that many people first learn to generalize, form arguments, and respond to counterarguments. Moreover, debates about gender, race, economics, patriotism, justice, and drugs arise in the context of discussions of sport" (pp. 46-47).

Ignoring the opportunity sports present to teach positive moral behavior (along with many other worthwhile lessons) to young athletes would be a disappointing error in judgment.

Negative Characteristics of Sports Participation

As previously mentioned, there are several critics of sports and the lessons that they can teach our young people. Some of their sentiments are supported by research. One study came to the conclusion that there was virtually no evidence to support a correlation between participation in sports and character development (Coakley, 1982). Miracle and Rees (1994) agree with this finding. They stated, "there is no evidence to support the claim that sport builds character in high school or anywhere else" (p. 96). Yet another experiment found there is actually a negative correlation when looking at the length of time of one's involvement in sports and the generation of certain sportsmanlike values (Coakley, 1982). The researcher found the longer an individual was involved in sports the more likely they were to engage in morally questionable behaviors.

McCallister, et al. (2000) looked at specific outcomes of sports participation. They found "outcomes resulting from participation [in sports] include undue stress and tension, low levels of moral reasoning, overemphasis on winning, poor self-esteem, cheating, internalization of adult norms, disregard for opponents, and lack of respect for others" (p. 36). Athletes themselves have admitted to engaging in questionable moral behavior during athletic competitions. In their study, Long, et.al. (2006) referred to the concept of "game reasoning" which involves a moral transformation by players during competition towards a mindset of self interest. Long and colleagues stated that during athletic play it is more acceptable to engage in ethically poor behavior and that this behavior is more likely to be considered a legitimate method of achieving one's goal. The study went on to point out specific examples of poor ethical behavior by athletes who themselves stated that their motivation for following rules is not to show integrity but to

avoid sanctions from game officials. In addition, players assert their motivation for not cheating is that they may get caught and that committing penalties on purpose is sometimes strategically smart.

Engel (2002) highlighted some of the problems in sportsmanship at the youth level. He found 45.3% of all youth sport participants surveyed at been yelled at or insulted, 21% had been pressured into playing despite being hurt, and 8% had felt pressure to intentionally hurt an opposing player. These numbers emphasized the worst aspects of youth sports and served as the major cause why many kids simply do not continue to participate in athletics past the youth level. Of the approximately 20 million youth who participate in sport each year, Engel predicted 70% would discontinue their involvement before they reach age 13.

Sleek's (1996) research showed why the divide between positive and negative experiences exists in sports participation. He stated there are two types of "orientations" people have when faced with a competition: ego orientation and task orientation. Those with an inclination toward ego orientation compete in order to win and through winning exhibit their superiority over others. Those that show a task orientation compete in order to complete a task, improve their skills, and live up to personal goals they set for themselves. When one considers today's sports culture, especially that of professional sports, it is not hard to understand the enhanced view of winning and the apparent decline in sportsmanship. "When youth sport participants are constantly exposed to such models, it is no wonder that they show little sportsmanship and respect for their opponents" (Goldstein & Iso-Ahola, 2006, p. 19). A study conducted by Raspberry (1998) highlighted the obvious presence of ego orientation in youth soccer players when he

found that 84% of teenage players stated they would deliberately foul an opponent if it would help them win the game. Coaches have a tendency to make matters worse at times. By "mimicking the highly publicized professional model, many coaches are showing their players that winning by any means necessary is acceptable" (Lumpkin, 2008, p. 19).

Positive Characteristics of Sports Participation

"Sport can provide one of the greatest opportunities in school for a youngster to learn how to be dishonest and how to be hypocritical, but it can also provide the greatest opportunities for a student to learn honesty, integrity, and ethical behavior" (Sabock, 1985, p. 271). Sports are considered by some "to be highly instrumental in enhancing morality, integrating social minorities, enabling people to follow rules and respect each other, and thus make good citizens in everyday life" (Long et al., 2006, p. 330).

Participation in sports brings about positive outcomes "such as fair play, respect for others, cooperation, decision-making, working with others, skill development, leadership, and moral development" (McCallister et al., 2000, p. 36). Furthermore, sports have been instrumental in teaching characteristics associated with citizenship in our society. This is evidenced by the inclusion of a strong sense of cooperation, institutional loyalty, and a willingness or even eagerness to sacrifice for the good of the group (O'Hanlon, 1980). In academic research and casual conversation, youth sports are commonly referred to as a "positive socializing agency for children and adolescents" (McCallister et al., 2000, p. 36).

Despite the fact people lose sight of this from time to time, the primary reason why young people participate in sports is to have fun. Sports can help children develop friendships, improve physical fitness, acquire goal setting skills, be part of a team, and

gain a sense of personal achievement (Lumpkin, 2008). Participation in athletics can also foster proactive and positive thinking, the ability to learn from adversity and triumph over it, a never surrender attitude, physical and psychological courage, honesty and fair play, a sense of humor and the ability to laugh at oneself, self-esteem and a belief in oneself, interdependence, and tolerance of others (Minchew, 2002). These are all traits members of American society tend to value and desire to be instilled into our children.

Coaches Can Make All the Difference

To this point, the research has shown that in some areas sports are quite helpful to youth development of positive moral behavior, while other studies assert the opposite. What could possibly be the difference between the two schools of thought? Many believe the disparity lies in the attitudes of the coach. In fact, Steelman (1995) stated the "coach may in fact be the most significant individual in determining the values and life skills that children learn through participation" (p. 15). Because coaches are in positions of authority and have tremendous ability to influence the players, their values and philosophies directly impact the outcome of participatory experience for the youngsters under their leadership (Steelman, 1995). Due to the fact that the definition of morality is socially defined within the context of a given group, the ethical climate put forth by the coach of a team has a tremendous influence on young people's moral behaviors within the sport (Goldstein & Iso-Ahola, 2006). In 2002, *The Futurist* ran an article in which Darren Treasure, a sports psychology specialist at Arizona State University, put it bluntly by making the claim participation in athletics with poor coaching in the area of sportsmanship could be damaging to a child's moral development, the effects of which could last a lifetime.

Research shows that there is no guarantee moral development will occur simply by participating in athletics. There is a fair amount of empirical data suggesting when coaches present themes of ethical development with the participants, advances in moral reasoning do indeed occur. For instance, an experiment conducted by Bredemeier, Weiss, Shields, and Shewchuk (1986) centered around three groups of children. Two were given instruction from coaches on themes of fairness, aggression, and justice while the other control group was not. The results indicated the control group saw no significant change but both test groups saw significant gains in moral reasoning. The difference was not in the makeup of the children or differences in competitive situations, but rather in the type of coaching they received.

Romance, Weiss, and Bockoven (1986) focused on the effects of a structural development curriculum on life, sports, and moral reasoning. The experimental groups were given discussion topics on moral dilemmas, which stressed the personal responsibilities of the individuals in the group while the control group received no such instruction. The results showed a significant improvement in moral reasoning for the experimental group while the control group actually experienced a slight decline in their moral reasoning. In yet another study, researchers placed sports participants into three groups: 1) fair play in sports and in the classroom, 2) fair play in sports only, and 3) no fair play curriculum at all (control group). They found both experimental groups scored much higher on moral development tests than the control group, and there was very little difference in the attitudes of groups 1 and 2. This supports the theory that lessons on fair play are just as effective on the playing field as in the classroom or anywhere else (Gibbons, Ebbeck, & Weiss, 1995). The most obvious finding in all of these research

projects is the importance of coaches to be proactive in their lessons on morality, sportsmanship, and fair play. They can make a difference in their players. Many coaches do not even attempt to teach sportsmanship or ethical behavior. Often they find it is nearly impossible to do so. Peer pressure, the home environment, and other factors are working against their efforts and it is very easy for them to simply give up (Sanborn & Hartman, 1982). This is unfortunate because the research suggests they have a definite ability to affect young people in a positive way.

Coaches hold the key to making sports a place to learn ethical values. The first step is for the coach to realize that his/her behavior "directly affects athletes' perceptions" (Myers, Feltz, Maier, Wolfe, & Reckase, 2006, p. 111). Then, "in order for values development to occur, [coaches] must be proactive in their involvement by designing and implementing appropriate learning experiences. Without this commitment, values such as sportsmanship will continue to deteriorate and the long-term effects could affect the future of interscholastic and intercollegiate sport" (Wandzilak, Carroll, & Ansorge, 1988, p. 20).

Spencer (1996) stated:

Dealing with ethical issues does not have to be as daunting as it often seems. As coaches we need to reaffirm the integration of ethical behavior as a fundamental part of the profession. Furthermore, [coaches] need to help students begin to raise questions surrounding ethical issues in order to prepare them for the challenges of the future (p. 40).

Perhaps above all the task of coaches is to practice the message of Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic games. He stated:

The important thing...is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well. To spread these precepts is to build a stronger and more valiant, and above all, more scrupulous and more gracious humanity" (Plimpton, 1991, p. 469).

Coaches have been given a tremendous responsibility and the time has come for them to live up to the highest standards possible.

Coaches Face an Ethical Dilemma

If the role of the coach is so significant in the character development of the athletes participating then why is this tremendous opportunity to foster integrity being missed by so many in this position? For starters, many may not know how. As of 2001, only 15 states mandated formal education requirements for all coaches (American Sport Education Program, 2001). At the youth level, it needs to be remembered that many coaches at the youth level do not get paid and many were selected by default due to the fact no one else was interested in the position (McCallister, et al., 2000). At the high school level, perhaps the largest reason for the lack of attention being paid to sportsmanship is because coaches are under substantial pressure to win from parents, administrators, and their communities (Miller, et al., 2005).

A recent study conducted in Texas discovered that from 1994 to 2004 593 high school coaches (2.9 per school surveyed) had been removed from their coaching positions. The most frequent motivation for dismissing a coach was a failure to win enough games (Miller et. al, 2005). This finding supports previous findings by Lackey (1986) who examined coaching dismissals in Nebraska. Again, unacceptable win-loss records were the most common grounds for firing a high school coach. "Though more

research is necessary, it appears that high school coaches are working primarily on the performance principle - win or lose your job" (Miller et. al, 2005, pg. 33).

Pressure from parents also constitutes a large source of stress for high school coaches. A study conducted by Lackey (1994) stated parents are the main cause of pressure on coaches followed closely by fans and boosters. Lumpkin (2008) discussed a "parental preoccupation with winning [in which] parents seem to live vicariously through their children's athletic accomplishments" (p.20). A recent article in Sports Illustrated entitled "Out of Control" discussed the alarming trend of parents engaging in verbal abuse and even violence toward coaches and officials of their child's team. The article mentioned several instances in which legal action has been required for parents who have engaged in an overly aggressive and hostile manner. The authors claimed this type of behavior is becoming an epidemic (Nack & Munson, 2000). This ridiculous behavior stems from the ever-increasing investment by parents in their child's athletic career in an attempt to procure lucrative rewards such as college scholarships or professional contracts (Coakley, 1998). Many coaches are influenced by these parents and feel an increased pressure to win to satisfy their longing for on-field success.

The knowledge that coaches have a tremendous impact on the character development of their athletes combined with the intense pressure they feel to win makes for a profound ethical dilemma that each coach must face. While interviewing coaches, Drewe (2000) found the most frequent dilemma that coaches admit to was making a decision in which what was best for the team differed from what was best for the individuals involved. The discussed scenarios included playing an injured player, disciplining a key player, intentionally harming an opponent, and dealing with

performance enhancing drug use by players. Each of these scenarios involves an ethical dilemma in which a coach could, theoretically, give his/her team a better chance to win by sacrificing his/her ethical beliefs. Overwhelmingly, the coaches interviewed stated they would stay true to their morals, values, and beliefs in a given situation. However, this is easy to say in an interview. It is much more difficult when the pressure to perform is actually on.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between attitudes held by high school baseball coaches regarding sportsmanship and the on-field success of his teams over time. It was the aim of the researcher to discover whether or not coaches who claim a strict adherence to a set of sportsmanlike principles have career winning percentages that compare favorably to those of coaches who are more willing to take a less sportsmanlike approach in dealing with their athletes. Furthermore, the study attempted to identify any variables that may influence on-field success more so than a coach's views pertaining to ethical behavior. As a result, in addition to winning percentage, the study also focused on the independent variables of age, years of experience, and whether or not each coach was also employed as a teacher. The dependent variables were the various attitudes coaches had in regards to sportsmanship and ethics. The researcher hypothesized that the data would show coaches who maintain a stricter adherence to sportsmanlike viewpoints and behaviors achieve victory as often as coaches who feel they need to bend the rules in order to achieve success. It was felt that if this were the case, more coaches who felt pressure to win games would be less disposed to deviate from their sportsmanlike views.

This chapter will illustrate the targeted research population and sample as well as the setting in which the research took place. The research design, methods for data collection, and strategies and procedures for statistical analysis will also be described.

Setting and Participants

Baseball coaches at the high school level served as the population for this study. It was the intention of the researcher to gather data which, once analyzed, would benefit individuals who serve as leaders of youth who participate in the game of baseball. Due to the fact this population includes thousands of people, it was determined that a more narrow sample of this group needed to be focused on. This study relied on data collected through an electronic survey sent to current varsity baseball coaches in Minnesota and Wisconsin with at least one year of experience at that level of coaching. It was felt by the researcher this sample would serve as an adequate representation of the entire coaching field, and was selected due to its proximity to the researcher and the relative ease in obtaining the contact information of the coaches making up the sample. This strategy is known as "cluster sampling" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2008, p. 112). Cohen and colleagues warn of risks associated with the use of cluster sampling. He urges the researcher to "be careful to ensure that cluster sampling does not build in bias" (Cohen, et. al., 2008, p. 112) due to the fact the sample has not been chosen randomly. The researcher was aware the potential lack of variability encompassed within this sample, and has avoided making broad generalizations based on the findings of the research project.

At the time the study was developed, the Minnesota High School Baseball Coaches Association website listed 415 coaches employed by Minnesota schools (mshsbca.org, 2010) while the Wisconsin Baseball Coaches Association annual yearbook lists 441 employed by Wisconsin schools (Waite & Fuller, 2010). Using the directories provided by each of these sources to obtain the contact information, each of these 856

coaches were contacted via email and invited to participate in the online survey. It was reasonable to assume the selected sample of 856 coaches was adequately representative of the overall baseball coaching population in terms of age, gender, experience, income level, education, and any other stratum typically found in the coaching field.

Upon sending the invitation to participate in the survey it was discovered that not all of the individuals listed in the directories would be able to be contacted. This was due to personnel changes since the directories were printed, alterations of email address for the coaches, or simply typos in the directory. Ultimately the total number of coaches contacted was 808. The final rate of return of the electronic survey was 272 of a possible 808 or 33.6% of all coaches contacted. Demographic analysis showed that the majority of participants were under the age of 45 (58%) and had 10 or fewer years of experience coaching at the varsity level (54%). Individuals currently employed as teachers comprised 73.3% of respondents. In addition, coaches with winning career records were more willing to participate than those with losing records. 66% of coaches who knew their career winning percentage claimed they owned a career winning percentage of .500 or higher.

Permission was granted to the researcher from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to move forward with this study on August 30, 2010 (Appendix A). The IRB determined the study was exempt from review under exempt category two due to the study's use of survey procedures. Due to the fact each research subject was an adult whose contact information was public record and who had been notified by the researcher up front of their right to decline to participate at any time, no further consent was required for the researcher to proceed.

Research Design

A quantitative approach was utilized throughout the research process. Creswell (2009) stated quantitative research is the best means for "testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables" (p. 4). The researcher determined that a comparison of the independent variables of "career winning percentage," "age," "years of experience," and "teacher vs. non-teacher" and the dependent variables (which are the coaches' various attitudes concerning the different ethical situations) were sufficient in answering the aforementioned research question. By examining the relationship between these variables, it was the researcher's goal to determine if a coach's attitudes concerning sportsmanship had a direct correlation to his career winning percentage or if other variables tended to play a significant role. A self-administered questionnaire was determined to be the most efficient and most effective available tool to procure this information from the rather large and relatively dispersed sample. All data collected was cross-sectional in nature as it was collected from each respondent at one moment in time and did not allow for changes in attitudes or perceptions over time.

All respondents were informed of who the researcher was, the overall intent of the research project, and the procedures that would be undertaken during the research process (Appendix B). The potential subjects were notified of their liberty to decline participation at any time and each subject was guaranteed complete anonymity. Anonymity was feasible due to the fact that there were no questions pertaining to identifying information (i.e. name, address, email, etc.) included in the online survey. It was the researcher's hope that by offering anonymity to each potential research subject, the rate of return would improve as well as the overall level of honesty of responses to each item on the survey.

Data Gathering

After collecting coaches' contact information from the directories mentioned above, initial communication with each individual commenced on via email in September 2010. Within this email, the researcher's intent as well as the project's procedure was described to each potential subject and individuals desiring to participate were given instructions on how to proceed. A link to the online survey was provided within the introductory email. Upon clicking the link, the research subject was taken to the online survey which contained a questionnaire with nineteen closed-ended questions (Appendix C-G). Some of the prompts utilized in this survey were taken, with permission, from a 2008 survey of college baseball coaches conducted by Mr. Michael Josephson of the Josephson Institute for Sports Ethics (Josephson, 2010).

The survey, in addition to collecting general demographic information, asked each respondent to respond to several prompts, which served to quantify their attitudes pertaining to sportsmanship within the game of baseball. Two of these prompts were nominal in nature as they contain categories which are "mutually exclusive and have no numerical meaning" (Cohen, et al., p. 502). The remaining prompts asked respondents to provide input via a Likert scale in which the subjects stated whether they "strongly agree", "agree", "disagree", or "strongly disagree" with a series of statements concerning specific situations in a baseball game where an ethical decision must be made. Cohen et al. (2009) refers to this type of scale as an "ordinal scale" (p. 502).

While absolute validity of data can never be ensured, the researcher took proactive steps to make certain that the inferences gleaned from the accumulated data are as accurate as possible. Cohen et al. (2009) supplied the researcher with numerous tactics

for minimizing invalidity including "choosing an appropriate time scale," "selecting an appropriate methodology for answering the research question," "selecting appropriate instrumentation for gathering the type of data required," "using an appropriate sample," and "selecting appropriate foci to answer the research questions" (p. 144). It was the researcher's view that each of these steps was adhered to and therefore this research project could accurately be described as valid.

In addition to being valid, a successful research project must also meet the standard criteria for being reliable. Cohen et al. (2009) describes reliability as "a synonym for dependability, consistency, and replicability over time, over instruments, and over groups of respondents" (p. 146). In order to test for internal reliability the researcher elected to measure each item's Cronbach alpha, which is "frequently referred to as the alpha coefficient of reliability" (Cohen et al., p. 148). The researcher was attempting to measure and then make a generalization concerning each coach's attitudes pertaining to sportsmanship and taking this step to gauge the internal consistency among each of the items on the survey gave him the confidence to do this with more conviction. The researcher used the commonly accepted rule-of-thumb that a coefficient of .70 indicates adequate reliability and .80 and above indicates good reliability.

Data Analysis

Each completed survey was uploaded to the researcher's SurveyMonkey account where the data was analyzed. The mean, median, mode, and standard deviations were determined for items 1-4 on the survey. For items 5-17 the percentage of coaches supplying each specific response was ascertained. Descriptive statistics were computed for each ordinal scale and reported in tables similar to the one shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Sample Table of Descriptive Statistics to be Included in Results Section

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Item # 5	(W%)	(X%)	(Y%)	(Z%)
Item #6	(W%)	(X%)	(Y%)	(Z%)
Item # 7	(W%)	(X%)	(Y%)	(Z%)

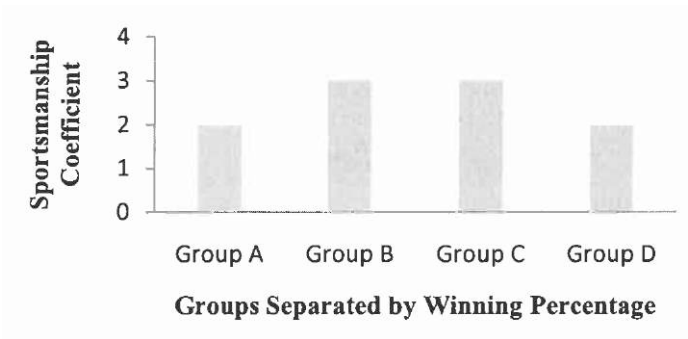
The dependent variable was "the coach's attitude concerning sportsmanship" which can be difficult to quantify due to the fact that a coach may view each item on the questionnaire differently in terms of its relevancy to sportsmanship. To remedy this, the researcher assigned numerical values to each possible response to items 8-17 on the survey, and then calculated the overall mean response. For example, a coach who "strongly disagrees" with an item would receive 4 "points" for that response while a coach who "strongly agrees" with an item would receive 1 "point". The numerical value was calculated simply by adding the total "points" accumulated by each response and dividing that value by 11 (the total number of questions on the Likert scale) to find the mean value. Once the mean was determined, this numerical value was established as the dependent variable and labeled the "Sportsmanship Coefficient". Based on this formula, the highest potential "sportsmanship coefficient" was 4 while the lowest potential value was 1.

Descriptive statistics were utilized in an effort to determine the answer to the research question: Are coaches who approach the game with sportsmanship as a main goal as competitive as those who do not? Simple comparative information was utilized by

showing the "sportsmanship coefficient" vs. the independent variable of "career winning percentage" shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

The Relationship between Sportsmanship and Winning



Descriptive statistics were also analyzed to provide the reader with the demographic breakdown of subject responses. Tables 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5 show the way in which this was done.

Table 3.3

Percentage of Respondents who Agree with Each Item

	Winning Percentage of Coaches			
	Less than .300	.300-.500	.500-.700	Higher than .700
Item # 7	-	-	-	-
Item #8	-	-	-	-
Item #9	-	-	-	-
Item #10	-	-	-	-

Table 3.1

Percentage of Respondents who Agree with Each Item

	Age of Coaches		
	35 and under	36-45	46 and over
Item # 7	-	-	-
Item #8	-	-	-
Item #9	-	-	-
Item #10	-	-	-

Table 3.5

Percentage of Respondents who Agree with Each Item

	Years of Experience of Coaches			
	5 or fewer	6-10	10-20	More than 20
Item # 7	-	-	-	-
Item #8	-	-	-	-
Item #9	-	-	-	-
Item #10	-	-	-	-

Summary

The data collected from the selected sample via an online survey provided the researcher with a tremendous amount of information. The analysis of this data, which is presented and thoroughly discussed in the following chapter, is intended to provide high school coaches with some level of guidance as to how their attitudes concerning sportsmanship correlate with the eventual on-field success of their teams.

CHAPTER 4

Research and Discussion

Analysis of the data in this research focused on two areas: (a) identifying views pertaining to sportsmanship held by high school baseball coaches, and (b) determining what relationships exist between these views and the on-field success of the coaches. High school varsity baseball coaches from Minnesota and Wisconsin were invited to participate in an online survey and their responses provide the results and subsequent discussion that follows. This chapter will provide the reader with demographic information concerning the selected sample, findings concerning the relationship between sportsmanship and winning, and offer discussion on the results of the research.

Demographics

The final sample included a total of 272 returned surveys. The rate of response was 33.6%. Of participating coaches, 58% were 45 years old or younger while about 14% of respondents were over the age of 55. 54% had 10 years or less years of experience coaching at the varsity level but the sample also saw 5.6% of respondents coaching for more than 30 years. Over 73% of respondents were teachers. Coaches with winning records tended to respond at a higher percentage as 66% claimed to own a career record over .500. In fact, coaches with winning percentages over .600 made up a healthy 39.4% of total respondents.

Attitudes Concerning the Role of the Coach

When asked to give their views on the primary role of coaches at their level, respondents suggested they were well aware of the importance of sportsmanship in their field (Table 4.1). Over 68% of respondents stated their most important objective was to

help athletes develop good character, ethical values, and positive life skills to assist them in leading socially productive lives. 26% declared their primary objective was to develop the skills of the athlete to help him/her reach their highest potential. Only 5.2% of respondents believed their principal responsibility was to win as many games as possible within the rules and standards of the game.

Table 4.1

What is the Most Important Objective for a Coach at the High School Level?

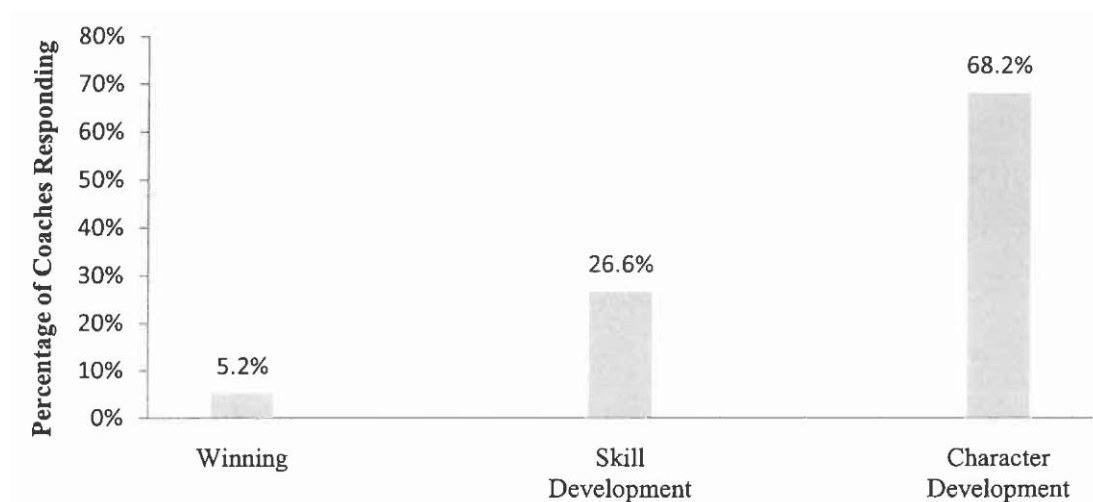
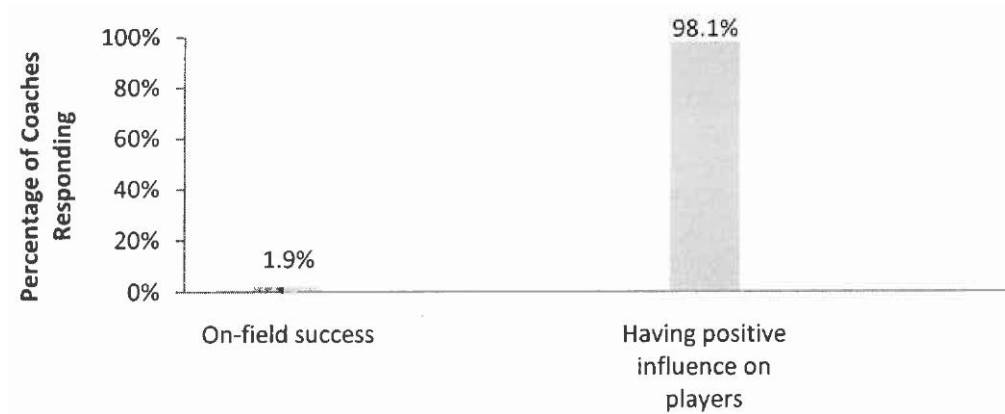


Table 4.2 illustrates that when asked what they would be most proud of at the end of their coaching career, respondents overwhelmingly showed agreement. Over 98% of those surveyed stated they would be most proud of a celebration of their success as a teacher with athletes telling them they impacted their lives to make them better people. A mere 1.9% of coaches asserted they would be most proud of their on-field success, championships won, records set, and athletes who went on to excel at the next level.

Table 3.1

Which Would You be Most Proud of, Upon Retirement?



Coaches' Perception of Sportsmanship

Respondents were given a series of statements and asked to rate their level of agreement with each to measure their attitudes concerning the practicality of employing sportsmanlike behaviors. As shown in Table 4.3, when presented with the prompt *I would rather win than be considered a good sport* over 91% stated some level of disagreement.

Also shown in Table 4.3, over 82% of responding coaches disagreed with the statement, *people who are willing to break the rules are more likely to succeed than people who are not*. Concerning their ability to affect the behavior of their athletes, an overwhelming 96.6% of respondents agreed with the statement of *coaches can, if they chose to, influence the values and conduct of their athletes*. It seems as though the vast majority of coaches feel sportsmanship matters and that they can inspire athletes in this area if they choose to.

Table 3.1

Percentage of Coaches Replying to Prompts Regarding Sportsmanship

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Sportsmanship is an overrated concept. I would rather win than be considered a good sport.	36%	46%	17%	1%
In sports, people who are willing to break the rules are more likely to succeed than people who are not.	57%	34%	6%	3%
Most coaches can, if they chose to, influence the values and conduct of their athletes	2%	2%	47%	49%

Coaches' Positions on Specific Game Situations

It was the goal of the researcher to gauge attitudes concerning tangible items related to sportsmanship instead of focusing only on the topic in a theoretical nature. In an effort to realize this goal, coaches were asked to respond to statements pertaining to specific situations which may occur in a high school game. Seven statements were made regarding commonly occurring ethical dilemmas in baseball. Each asked coaches if it was proper for a coach to act in an ethically questionable manner in order to gain an advantage on the field. Coaches, on the whole, disagreed with six of the seven statements stating it was not proper for a coach to gain a competitive edge by engaging in unsportsmanlike behavior. For four of the seven questions, the majority of coaches strongly disagreed. The only statement coaches tended to agree with was on the issue of stealing signs. The majority of respondents felt it was proper for a coach to instruct their players to steal their opponent's signs. Coaches' responses for each item are categorized in Table 4.4.

Table 3.1

Percentages of Coaches Responding to Prompts Concerning In-Game Situations

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is proper for a coach to instruct his pitcher to throw at, or dangerously close to, an opposing hitter to brush him back.	35.2%	49.6%	14.4%	0.8%
It is proper for a coach of a team that relies heavily on the bunt to alter the field of play and build up the foul lines to increase the chance of keeping bunts fair.	29.0%	50.4%	18.3%	2.3%
It is proper for a coach to deliberately provoke an umpire to throw him out of the game in order to energize his team.	58.7%	37.1%	3.8%	0.4%
It is proper for a coach to instruct his players how to steal an opponent's signs.	4.6%	29.0%	56.1%	10.3%
It is proper for a coach to continue stealing bases with a sizable lead in order to practice for closer games in the future.	53.2%	42.2%	4.2%	0.4%
It is proper for a coach to deliberately make the visitors' locker room (or dugout) uncomfortably hot or cold as a strategy to gain an advantage.	59.2%	37.7%	2.6%	0.4%
It is proper for a coach to encourage his players to act in a boastful manner to intimidate the opponent.	64.2%	33.2%	2.6%	0.0%

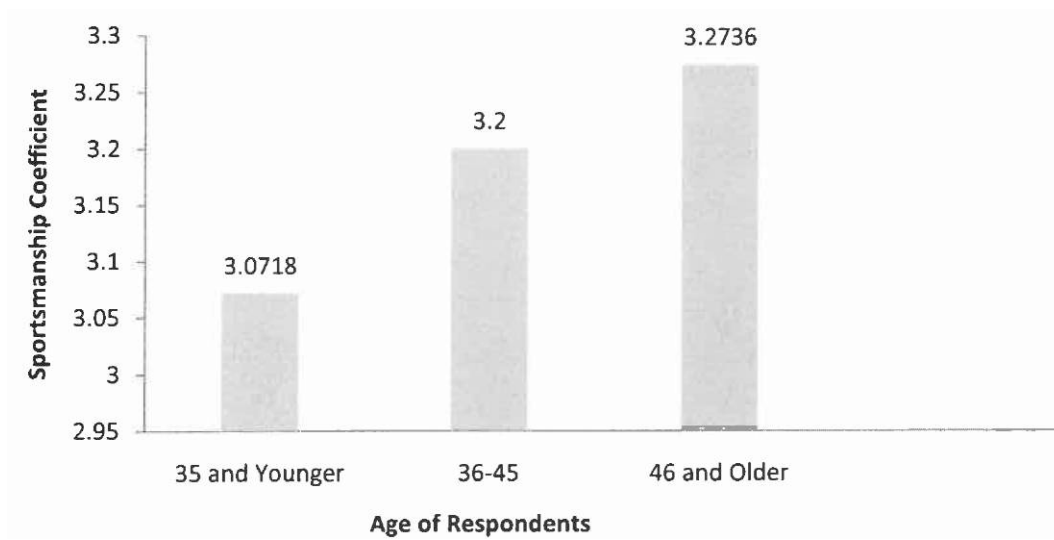
Age and Experience Impacts Attitudes toward Sportsmanship

Coaches were asked for their age in an attempt to discover any relationships existing between age and attitudes regarding sportsmanship. Using the Sportsmanship Coefficient mentioned in chapter 3 (p. 27) a distinct relationship was found to exist between these two variables. Analysis of the data showed younger coaches with less sportsmanlike views than older coaches. Respondents were divided into three categories: Ages 35 and younger, ages 36-45, and ages 46 and older. Analysis of responses showed that, as coaches grow older, their attitudes tend to transform from being focused on gaining a competitive advantage to being more attentive to the ethical element of their job. As shown in Table 4.5, the youngest age group had a Sportsmanship Coefficient of

3.0718 while the group of 36-45 year olds was measured at 3.200. The group with the highest Coefficient, 3.2736, was also the oldest. This data seems to imply the fact that as coaches get older and more mature they tend to become more concerned with the ideals of sportsmanship.

Table 4.5

The Relationship between Age and Attitudes Concerning Sportsmanship

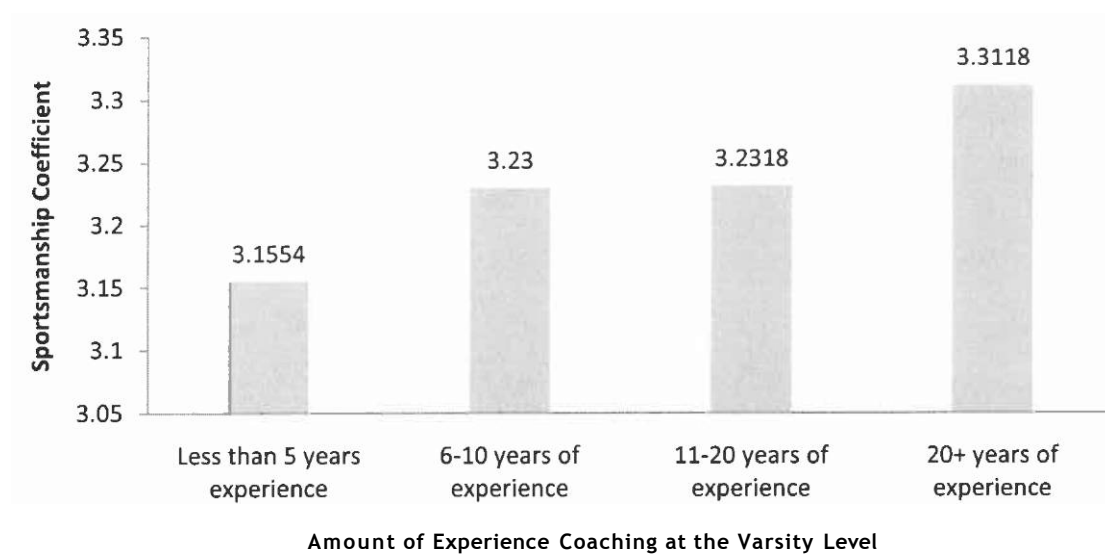


Analysis of coaches' responses also showed a relationship between years of experience and attitudes concerning sportsmanship. Much like age, it was found that the longer an individual had been a coach the greater his focus on sportsmanlike ideals (Table 4.6). Coaches with less than five years of experience held a Sportsmanship Coefficient of 3.1554 while coaches with 6-10 years of experience were measured at 3.23. Those who have coached for 11 to 20 years held a Sportsmanship Coefficient of 3.2318. While the differences between these groups are relatively minor, the contrast between these three groups and coaches with more than 20 years of experience is more pronounced. Coaches with the most experience showed the strongest relationship with

sportsmanship by measuring 3.3118. This coefficient was the largest of any group studied in the entire data analysis process. These numbers suggest that as coaches become more mature and their wisdom grows, winning games may become slightly less important to them.

Table 4.6

The Relationship between Experience in Coaching and Attitudes Concerning Sportsmanship

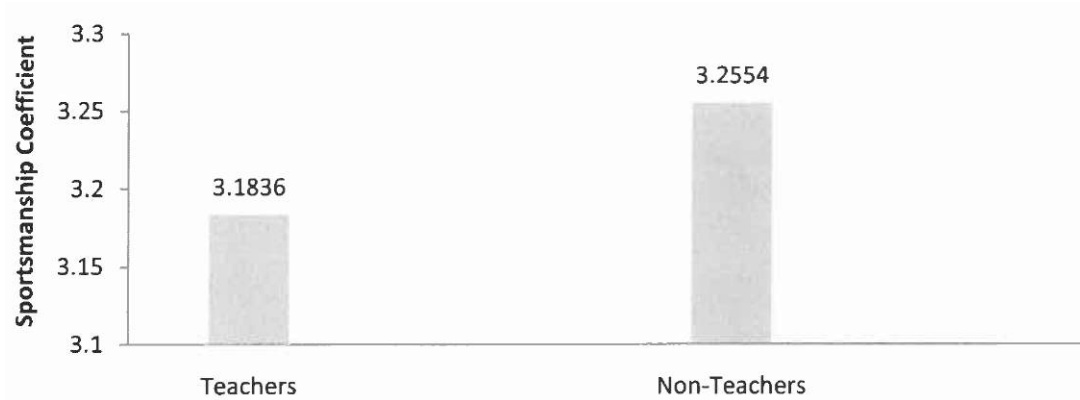


Teachers' and Non-Teachers' Attitudes toward Sportsmanship

Of the 270 respondents who participated in the study 199, a vast majority, stated they were employed as teachers. As Table 4.7 shows, it was found that non-teachers tended to display more sportsmanlike attitudes than those employed as teachers. Non-teachers were found to have a Sportsmanship Coefficient of 3.2554 while the group of teachers was calculated to be at 3.1836. In fact, of the eleven questions posed to coaches to determine their overall attitude concerning sportsmanship, the group of non-teachers had mean responses to ten of them indicating a greater appreciation for sportsmanship than the group of teachers.

Table 3.1

The Relationship between Teachers, Non-Teachers, and Attitudes Concerning Sportsmanship



Sportsmanship and Winning

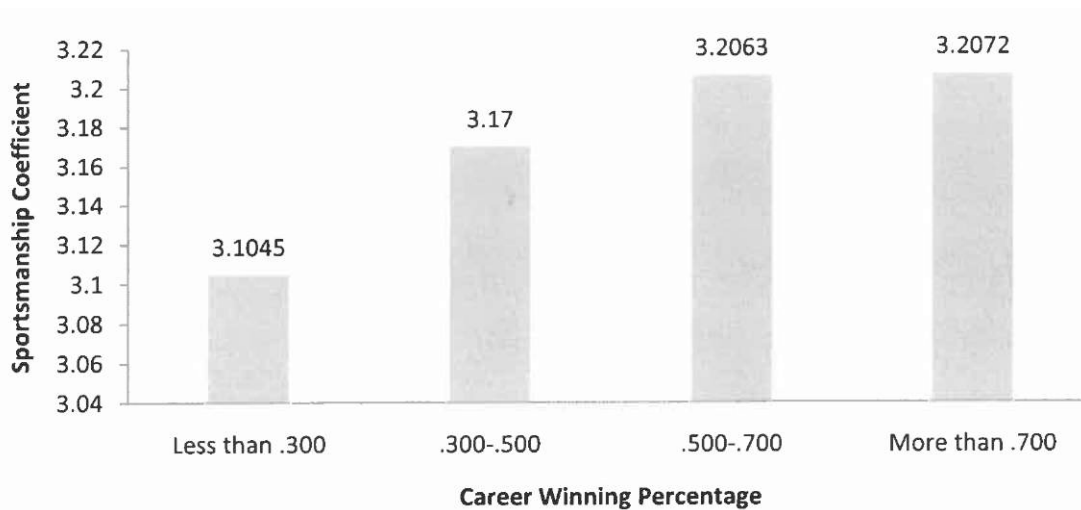
The primary focus of this research project was to determine whether or not coaches who stress sportsmanship within their programs are as competitive as those who do not. After analyzing the responses of 272 coaches the data suggests not only do coaches who voice a fervent appreciation for sportsmanship win as much as others - they tend to win more. Using the Sportsmanship Coefficient as a guide, it was found that those with winning records for their career tended to have stronger views concerning ethical behavior than those with losing records for their career. Coaches with career winning percentages of under .500 held Sportsmanship Coefficients of 3.1563 while coaches with career records over .500 were measured at 3.2081. This is not a large disparity but it is substantial enough to state with conviction that unfounded is the notion that coaches must disregard sportsmanship in order to be competitive on the field.

Upon further analysis of the data, the relationship between attitudes concerning sportsmanship and winning contests becomes even more pronounced. Coaches were divided into four groups based on their career winning percentages. As Table 4.8

indicates, as coaches' winning percentages increased their attitudes concerning sportsmanship tended to be strengthened. Coaches with poor winning percentages (less than .300) gave responses leading to a Sportsmanship Coefficient of 3.1045. This was the lowest of any group in this category. Coaches with tremendous winning percentages (over .700) offered responses which computed to a Sportsmanship Coefficient of 3.2072. This was the highest of any group in this category. These numbers do not prove coaches who pay attention to the ethical nature of coaching will automatically become more competitive on the field. However, they do suggest coaches who perceive sportsmanship as a potential obstacle to on-field success are misguided in their thinking.

Table 4.8

The Relationship between Career Winning Percentage and Attitudes Concerning Sportsmanship



Reliability

The aforementioned Sportsmanship Coefficient was found by calculating the mean response for each respondent on a list of eleven items on an online survey. Upon calculating the internal reliability of the questions it was found the Cronbach's Alpha of these items was .668. Further testing on reliability showed a Guttman Split-Half

Coefficient of .678. The reader should be aware of the fact Cohen (2007) finds these numbers to be quite low and their discovery calls the internal reliability of the items listed on the online survey somewhat into question. Cohen mentions an Alpha of greater than .90 is "very highly reliable" (p. 506) while anything over .70 meets the standard of reliability. He describes the range of .60-.69 as "marginally/minimally reliable" (p. 506).

While the alphas are approaching the standard level of reliability they fall slightly short. It is the view of the researcher that the shortcomings in this area are due to the relatively small number of response options on the Likert scale (4) and not necessarily an indication the items are clearly unreliable. Readers who remain skeptical of the reliability data should examine the descriptive statistics found in the appendix and draw their own conclusions regarding sportsmanship and coaching.

Cohen (2007) does mention a Bryner and Stribley (1979) book in which the authors state the alpha coefficient is acceptable if it is over .67. George and Mallery (2003) express their view by stating alpha's above .60 as "questionable" but only those items with alphas below .5 as "unacceptable" (p. 231). While adherence to these descriptions would serve to make this study technically reliable, the reader needs to be aware of the limitations of the study in this area.

Discussion

This study was designed to discover whether or not coaches who held the strongest concern for sportsmanship were as competitive on the field as those who were not as concerned. After collecting and analyzing data supplied by 272 high school baseball coaches from Minnesota and Wisconsin, it seems as though this claim is supported by empirical evidence. The results are open to the interpretation of the reader

but they appear to point in the direction that coaches do not actually become more successful by sacrificing the sportsmanlike ideals. It is the researcher's hope that coaches will use this study to guide their decision making, and prevent them from clinging to the myth that coaches who act in ethically questionable ways automatically win more games than other coaches.

Many researchers have focused on the benefits of athletic participation (Sabock, 1998; McCallister et al., 2000; Dworkin et al., 2003) while others have concentrated on the role of the coach in determining the level of character development in their athletes (Steelman, 1995; Josephson, 2008; Lumpkin, 2008). Still others have studied the role winning plays in influencing coaches' decisions (Lackey, 1994; Drewe, 2000; Miller et al., 2005; Naylor, 2006). It is the goal of the researcher to fill an existing gap in the literature by examining the relationship between attitudes concerning sportsmanship and how they may relate to on-field success of high school baseball coaches. It is the view of the researcher that this is a worthwhile endeavor because as Drewe (2000) states, the most common dilemma coaches encounter deals with the decision to do what is morally right or to do what will help the team win. This does not have to be the case. Coaches should be aware of the data presented in this study which suggests they do not tend to get a competitive advantage by forfeiting their ethical ideals.

Overall, the results of this study paint a positive picture of the state of high school baseball coaches in Minnesota and Wisconsin. The vast majority of answers seem to indicate coaches possess strong ethical awareness, an understanding of their ability to influence their athletes, and a desire to accomplish more than simply winning a substantial number of contests. The fact that 98.1% of all respondents claimed they

would rather be honored for positively impacting the lives of their athletes than for winning championships and setting records is amazing. This finding does not seem to support Lumpkin's (2008) claim that more coaches are "mimicking the highly publicized professional model... showing their players that winning by any means necessary is acceptable" (p. 19). Instead, this finding points to a tremendous awareness held by coaches about the importance of developing character in their athletes. It is unrealistic to assume each of the 263 coaches who stated this view live up to this ideal at every moment. However, the fact each recognizes this as a primary goal, and is what they should be striving to accomplish at every moment, is a good place to start.

The coach of a high school baseball team occupies a critical role in determining whether or not his team will behave in an ethical manner. An overwhelming 96% of coaches stated in the online survey they believe they have the ability to influence the values and conduct of their athletes. The fact coaches realize their power to positively influence the lives of their athletes is a crucial first step in ensuring high school athletes are receiving ethical leadership. High school athletes admit to feeling this influence. In a recent study conducted by the Josephson Institute Center for Sports Ethics, 90% of high school athletes surveyed stated their coaches set a good example of character and ethics. 91% claimed their coach wants them to do the ethically right thing, no matter what (Josephson, 2006). These statistics support the findings of this study: That coaches are aware of their influence and, for the most part, relay positive messages to their players.

If Steelman (1995) is correct when he states the coach is the most important person in determining whether outcomes of athletic participation are positive or negative, he would probably be encouraged by coaches participating in this study and their

declarations about their most important objective. The vast majority, 68.2% of respondents included in this study, stated their most important objective was to "help develop good character, ethical values, and positive life skills". Conversely, only 5.2% believed their primary objective to be to "win as many games as possible". No one is claiming winning games is not important, but it seems as though most coaches tend to agree with the fact it is not the most important goal coaches should have.

So if coaches understand how much they can influence one of their athletes and they hold winning as less important as character building, why do we sometimes see sportsmanship waning at the high school level? Often the answer is that coaches feel pressure to win from parents, administrators, the community, or boosters. The virtue of this study is it shows these coaches who feel tremendous pressure to win that they do not automatically have to forfeit their values concerning sportsmanship in order to stay competitive, please their supporters, and keep their jobs. The temptation to act in an unsportsmanlike way exists for every coach and it probably always will, but coaches need to know and understand they can still provide noble ethical leadership to their players while staying competitive.

One of the most obvious findings of the study was the fact that younger coaches and those with less experience tend to have less regard for the concept of sportsmanship. This result supports the findings of Josephson (2008) who found young coaches are more likely to possess cynical attitudes about the need to cheat to succeed. This could be true for a number of reasons. They probably put more pressure on themselves to win because they are still trying to earn the respect of their players, peer, and communities. Winning is the most obvious way to create excitement for a program, increase participation, and

become an established entity in the field of coaching. Many may feel that fostering a win-at-all-cost mentality is the best way to do this. This is unfortunate but also a reality. Young coaches want to make a name for themselves quickly and may be more willing to act in an unsportsmanlike way in order to achieve this.

Conversely, the oldest category of coaches tended to show the most concern for sportsmanship within their programs. In fact, they were measured to have the highest Sportsmanship Coefficient of any group examined for this study. This finding is consistent with Josephson's (2008) conclusion that the age of the coach is the most decisive factor in generating positive values and conduct of the coach. He found age had a larger impact on ethical attitudes than any other factor including years of experience, level of coaching, or religious beliefs. This is most likely due to the added wisdom and altered perception that can only come from experience in coaching and in life. These coaches probably feel secure in their positions and experience less pressure to win due to their longevity in their post.

Since older coaches and those with greater experience tend to exhibit more sportsmanlike attitudes steps should be taken to place these individuals in leadership positions where they can influence younger coaches. Furthermore, the fact that the majority of participants in this study were under the age of 45 and the largest group in terms of experience had 5 or fewer years in the coaching profession, more needs to be done to create a culture where coaches desire to stay in the profession longer. This culture change may include increases in compensation, stature, or administrative support. It should absolutely include the latitude to act as ethical leaders, even if it leads to a few more losses on the field. Young coaches should not be made to feel they need to win a

large percentage of games in order to be respected in the field or considered successful by their communities.

It was the goal of the researcher to show coaches who win more games care as much about sportsmanship as coaches who win less. This study surpassed the researcher's expectations by showing these coaches actually tend have higher career winning percentages. This could be explained any number of ways. It has already been stated that coaches who are older and have more experience in coaching have the strongest views concerning sportsmanship. This group probably has a wider knowledge base on proper techniques concerning the technical aspects of baseball due to their experience in the field. They probably know how to communicate with their players better and are more effective teachers than those who have only been coaching for a short time. Older coaches are also more likely to be coaching at schools and in communities who offer significant support. In other words, the researcher is not willing to go so far as to say coaches who win more do so because of their views concerning sportsmanship. It was not the goal of the study to show winning causes ethical views or vice versa. Rather, the study was designed to eliminate the myth that coaches must engage in ethically questionable behaviors in order to be successful in their careers. The data collected for this study seems support this aim.

Summary

The findings of this study support the notion that coaches are well aware of their role as ethical leaders. The data suggests older coaches and those with more experience tend to embrace sportsmanship more than coaches who are younger or less experienced. Most importantly, the results of the study showed no evidence to support the belief that

coaches who believe you must bend the rules to get ahead, act in unsportsmanlike ways, or place winning above character development actually enjoy more on-field success as a result of their views. On the contrary, the data collected in this study showed coaches who care the most about sportsmanlike behavior actually win more than coaches who are less interested in pursuing victory with honor and integrity. It is the desire of the researcher that this study will enhance the current literature by filling the existing gap on the relationship between sportsmanship and the quest for victory by high school baseball coaches.

CHAPTER 5

Summary and Conclusions

This study was designed and executed as a means to enhance the current data available to high school coaches in the area of ethical leadership. Many of us have seen studies or read statistics detailing the decline in sportsmanship at the high school level in the United States. Others have seen this regression of ethical behavior with their own eyes. It was the view of the researcher that a closer look needed to be taken on the causes of this deterioration of sportsmanship and, more importantly, what could be done to ensure our high school athletes are getting the ethical leadership from coaches they need and deserve.

One of the primary causes of the perceived weakening of sportsmanlike behavior in high school athletes was the coaching they were received. High school athletes are influenced mightily by their coaches and will often times go out of their way to please him or her. If coaches are condoning, or in some cases even demanding, win-at-all-cost attitudes and behaviors then that is exactly what they are going to get from their athletes. The goal of this research project was to provide empirical data to these coaches suggesting they did not need to convey these expectations to their players in order to be competitive. The objective was to show high school coaches it was possible to hold their players and themselves to high ethical standards and still remain competitive on the field.

The online survey and the analysis of the data provided by high school baseball coaches from Minnesota and Wisconsin did just that. The findings of the survey suggested there was no relationship between the sacrifice of sportsmanlike ideals and winning more games. In fact, this study showed coaches who claimed a stronger degree

of concern regarding sportsmanship tended to own higher career winning percentages than coaches who give it less attention. This is not to say the attitudes concerning sportsmanship caused the winning ways. Moreover, it does not necessarily show that coaches who win more games automatically have a fierce dedication to sportsmanship. The study does not claim that one causes the other. Instead, the study only asserts that the notion a coach cannot win as regularly if he/she maintains strong feelings concerning sportsmanship is erroneous.

Educational Implications

High school baseball coaches and those of other sports as well, are encouraged to examine the results of this study and use them to as a guide as they reflect on their own attitudes and behaviors. Coaches participating in the study overwhelming showed they are aware of their ethical duty and show it by acting in a manner becoming of a role model for high school athletes. The coaching field is made up of good people with strong morals and a strong dedication to positively affect the lives of young people. Frequently, the reason individuals sacrifice their time and energy to enter the coaching field is to play a positive role in the lives of the participants. However, they also want to win. The implications of this study are that coaches do not have to choose one or the other. They do not have to sacrifice one to have the other. They can be the ethical leaders they want to be and enjoy the glory and satisfaction that comes with winning at the same time. It is possible.

Winning is fun. Achieving victory makes us feel a sense of accomplishment and reminds us that with hard work, sacrifice, and perseverance success is attainable. Feelings of self worth and a healthy sense of pride are fostered through accomplishment.

Furthermore, even the valiant quest for triumph is important. It is of great magnitude to throw your heart and soul into an endeavor; to exhaust yourself in a worthy cause. We learn countless life lessons through striving for victory. Therefore, it is important the findings of this study are not misinterpreted. No one is claiming we need to stop trying to win. No one is claiming we should allow high school students to cease their struggle to become triumphant in various areas of their lives. Rather, these students should be encouraged to dedicate themselves completely to a cause and they should be provided with the necessary leadership to guide them in their quest. No one is arguing these students should become apathetic or simply allow others to achieve victory at their expense. They should be actively pursuing victory at every turn. However, it is the belief of the researcher that there is an honorable way to pursue this victory.

This study can serve as a guide for coaches as they attempt to balance their desire to win with their desire to play a positive role in the lives of their athletes. Coaches are teachers who carry high expectations from a number of groups, and often times the expectations of these groups conflict with each other. Coaches must be willing to actively reflect on their values and ethical standards while simultaneously toiling to develop the skills of their athletes to put the best team on the field possible. This is in addition to fulfilling the administrative duties required of a coach at the high school level such as fund raising, scheduling games, ordering equipment, and arranging travel accommodations. Obviously, coaches have a lot on their plate. However, it is imperative that high school coaches never forget what their primary obligation is: to use the sport to help athletes develop good character, ethical values, and positive life skills so they will perform well in school and have rewarding and socially productive lives.

Recommendations for Future Research

While this study does enhance the current existing literature in the area of ethical leadership by high school coaches, there is more that should be done to discover more. First, this study needs to be expanded upon to include sports other than baseball and perhaps levels other than the high school level. Coaches at all levels and of all sports could benefit from a closer look at the relationship between winning and sportsmanship in their specific area. Furthermore, the study could be expanded to include other geographic regions beyond Minnesota and Wisconsin to allow for comparative studies to commence. Lastly, a qualitative study on this topic needs to be designed and executed to allow coaches the opportunity to voice their attitudes, concerns, and points of view on this topic. Through interviews with coaches more can be learned about their thought processes concerning sportsmanship.

In addition, it was mentioned several times in the study that coaches often times felt substantial pressure to win from various sources including parents, administrators, the community, etc. It would be beneficial for the academic community and members of the coaching field to know how feelings of pressure specifically affected attitudes concerning sportsmanship. A better understanding of the effects and consequences of increased pressure on coaches in the area of moral leadership would expand on the insights gleaned from this study. Do coaches who feel increased pressure to win from different sources tend to sacrifice their ethical ideals?

Lastly, if one were so inclined a study could be devised in which the coach's responses to these prompts were compared to those of his/her players who would be asked to assess their coach in the area of ethical leadership. One limitation of this study

was the fact that coaches may have felt reluctant to share their true feelings regarding sportsmanship and instead gave responses which are more socially acceptable. By asking players to provide their input, it would serve to keep the coach honest in his/her responses and provide more frankness by participating coaches.

Summary

Most high school athletes will respect the title of coach no matter what. Coaches hold in the palm of their hand what the athlete wants: a spot on the team, playing time, praise, an opportunity to shine. As a result, young people will frequently yield to a coach's demands more readily than anyone else's. They want to play and they want to win and are willing to do what the coach tells them to do. However, young people need to see true strength of character in order for them to genuinely respect the human being standing behind the title of coach. This study showed coaches can achieve both of these types of respect. They can achieve victory and build relationships. They can teach the game as well as life skills. They can reach the peak of their profession by hoisting a trophy into the air while simultaneously knowing that achievement is less significant than the accomplishment of guiding their student-athletes on their journey to develop strong character and ethical values.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval

The IRB: Human Subjects Committee determined that the referenced study is exempt from review under federal guidelines 45 CFR Part 46.101(b) category #2
SURVEYS/INTERVIEWS; STANDARDIZED EDUCATIONAL TESTS;
OBSERVATION OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR.

Study Number: 1007E86573

Principal Investigator: Shawn Peck

Title(s):

The Cost of Pursuing Victory: A Study of the Relationship Between Coaches' Quest for Success and Their Commitment to Sportsmanship

This e-mail confirmation is your official University of Minnesota RSPP notification of exemption from full committee review. You will not receive a hard copy or letter. This secure electronic notification between password protected authentications has been deemed by the University of Minnesota to constitute a legal signature.

The study number above is assigned to your research. That number and the title of your study must be used in all communication with the IRB office.

Research that involves observation can be approved under this category without obtaining consent.

SURVEY OR INTERVIEW RESEARCH APPROVED AS EXEMPT UNDER THIS CATEGORY IS LIMITED TO ADULT SUBJECTS.

This exemption is valid for five years from the date of this correspondence and will be filed inactive at that time. You will receive a notification prior to inactivation. If this research will extend beyond five years, you must submit a new application to the IRB before the study's expiration date.

Upon receipt of this email, you may begin your research. If you have questions, please call the IRB office at (612) 626-5654.

You may go to the View Completed section of eResearch Central at <http://eresearch.umn.edu/> to view further details on your study.

The IRB wishes you success with this research.

Appendix B

Participant Letter of Consent

Hello,

My name is Shawn Peck and I am currently a graduate student at the University of Minnesota Duluth. In addition, I have coached baseball in Wisconsin and Minnesota for the past 9 years at the high school, and collegiate levels.

In connection with my graduate studies at UMD, I am conducting a research project which will serve to gather input from high school baseball coaches pertaining to their coaching philosophies and how these attitudes correlate to the on-field success of their teams. The purpose of this email is to invite you to participate in a short online survey which will focus on your attitudes on sportsmanship, ethical decision making, and the character development of your athletes. The closed-ended survey should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.

You can access the online survey by clicking [here](#).

Responses to the survey will be aggregated, ensuring your anonymity. Your identity will remain unknown to everyone including me, the researcher. You will not be asked to provide your name, address, phone number or any other identifying information that could potentially be used to trace your responses back to you. You should therefore feel free to contribute candidly as any input you provide will be met without repercussion or reproach.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and there are absolutely no consequences for not taking part. If you start the survey and do not want to complete it, you are free to stop at any point in time. Your completion and submission of the online survey will serve to indicate your willingness to participate in the study.

If you have any questions or have any concerns pertaining to this research project or have any interest in its eventual findings, you should feel free to contact me at 218-390-9693 or speck@d.umn.edu. You can also contact my academic adviser, Dr. Kim Riordan at 218-726-7251 or kriordan@d.umn.edu. This project has been approved by the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board (IRB) for research on human subjects. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Research Subjects Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455 or at (612) 625-1650.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Shawn Peck
University of Minnesota Duluth

*Appendix C***Coaches who Agreed with Each Statement Broken Down by Winning Percentage**

Percentages of coaches that agreed with each of the following:		Winning Percentages			
Statement	Overall percent of respondents who agreed	Less than .300 (17)	.300-.500 (65)	.500-.700 (134)	.700 and higher (29)
Sportsmanship is an overrated concept. I would rather win than be considered a good sport.	8.8%	17.6%	9.3%	8.2%	10.3%
In Sports, people who are willing to break the rules are more likely to succeed than people who are not.	17.8%	29.4%	23.0%	14.9%	13.8%
Most coaches can, if they chose to, influence the values and conduct of their athletes	96.6%	100%	95.3%	97.7%	89.6%
It is proper for a coach to do whatever is legal if it helps his team.	57.1%	56.2%	56.9%	57.1%	64.3%
It is proper for a coach to instruct his pitcher to throw at, or dangerously close to, an opposing hitter to brush him back.	15.2%	17.6%	18.4%	15.5%	10.7%
It is proper for a coach of a team that relies heavily on the bunt to alter the field of play and build up the foul lines to increase the chance of keeping bunts fair.	20.6%	23.5%	16.9%	16.6%	37.9%
It is proper for a coach to deliberately provoke an umpire to throw him out of a game in order to energize his team.	4.2%	5.9%	1.5%	4.4%	6.9%
It is proper for a coach to instruct his players how to steal an opponent's signs.	66.4%	52.9%	66.1%	70.4%	62.0%
It is proper for a coach to continue stealing bases with a sizable lead in order to practice for closer games in the future.	4.6%	12.5%	0%	5.2%	10.3%
It is proper for a coach to deliberately make the visitors' locker room (or dugout) uncomfortably hot or cold as a strategy to gain an advantage	3.0%	11.7%	4.6%	2.2%	0%
It is proper for a coach to encourage his players to act in a boastful manner in an attempt to intimidate the opponent	2.6%	5.8%	1.5%	2.2%	6.9%

Statement	Winning percentage of coaches responding	Win as many championships as possible within the rules and standards of the game by assembling and coaching the best team	Develop the skills of each athlete so he can reach his highest potential	Use the sport to help athletes develop good character, ethical values, and positive life skills so they will perform well in school and have rewarding and socially productive lives.
Which of the following statements comes closest to your view as the MOST important objective for a coach at the high school level?	.300 and lower	0%	35.3%	64.7%
	.300-.500	1.5%	25.8%	72.7%
	.500-.700	7.4%	30.1%	62.5%
	.700 and higher	6.9%	17.2%	75.9%
	OVERALL	5.2%	26.6%	68.2%

Statement	Winning percentage of coaches responding	A celebration of your exceptional success as a coach, the championships you won, the records you set, and the athletes you coached who excelled at the next level	A celebration of your success as a teacher with testimonials of athletes who say you positively impacted their lives and made them better people
At the end of your coaching career, a testimonial in your honor is planned. Which of the following forms of tribute would you be most proud of?	.300 and lower	0%	100%
	.300-.500	1.5%	98.5%
	.500-700	1.4%	98.6%
	.700 and higher	3.4%	96.6%
	OVERALL	1.9%	98.1%

Percentages of coaches that agreed with each of the following: Statement	Winning record* vs. Losing records		
	Overall percent of respondents who agreed	Coaches who are under .500 (77)	Coaches who are above .500 (160)
Sportsmanship is an overrated concept. I would rather win than be considered a good sport.	8.6%	10.3%	8.7%
In Sports, people who are willing to break the rules are more likely to succeed than people who are not.	17.5%	24.3%	14.3%
Most coaches can, if they chose to, influence the values and conduct of their athletes	96.9%	96.1%	96.8%
It is proper for a coach to do whatever is legal if it helps his team.	57.5%	55.8%	59.4%
It is proper for a coach to instruct his pitcher to throw at, or dangerously close to, an opposing hitter to brush him back.	15.2%	17.9%	15.0%
It is proper for a coach of a team that relies heavily on the bunt to alter the field of play and build up the foul lines to increase the chance of keeping bunts fair.	20.8%	19.2%	20.2%
It is proper for a coach to deliberately provoke an umpire to throw him out of a game in order to energize his team.	4.3%	2.5%	5.0%
It is proper for a coach to instruct his players how to steal an opponent's signs.	66.3%	64.1%	68.3%
It is proper for a coach to continue stealing bases with a sizable lead in order to practice for closer games in the future.	4.3%	1.3%	6.2%
It is proper for a coach to deliberately make the visitors' locker room (or dugout) uncomfortably hot or cold as a strategy to gain an advantage	3.1%	6.4%	1.8%
It is proper for a coach to encourage his players to act in a boastful manner in an attempt to intimidate the opponent	2.7%	2.5%	3.1%

Statement	Coaches with a winning percentage over .500 vs. coaches with winning records under .500	Win as many championships as possible within the rules and standards of the game by assembling and coaching the best team	Develop the skills of each athlete so he can reach his highest potential	Use the sport to help athletes develop good character, ethical values, and positive life skills so they will perform well in school and have rewarding and socially productive lives.
Which of the following statements comes closest to your view as to what the MOST important objective is for a coach at the high school level	Coaches with losing records	1.3%	27.8%	70.9%
	Coaches with winning records	7.4%	27.8%	64.8%
	OVERALL	5.4%	26.5%	68.1%

Statement	Coaches with a winning percentage over .500 vs. coaches with winning records under .500	A celebration of your exceptional success as a coach, the championships you won, the records you set, and the athletes you coached who excelled at the next level	A celebration of your success as a teacher with testimonials of athletes who say you positively impacted their lives and made them better people
At the end of your coaching career, a testimonial in your honor is planned. Which of the following forms of tribute would you be most proud of	Coaches with losing records	1.3%	98.7%
	Coaches with winning records	1.8%	98.2%
	OVERALL	1.9%	98.1%